

ECA Update: August 17, 2015



In this update:

NRC Issues Draft Supplement to Yucca Mountain Environmental Impact Statement

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Public Affairs

Yucca could have 'small' groundwater impact, report finds *The Hill*

NRC, DOE to Host Advanced Reactor Workshop Sept. 1-2 in Bethesda

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Public Affairs

Editorial: Latest report adds to Yucca Mountain site

The Aiken Standard

Savannah River Site's new manager focused on waste pathways, infrastructure funding

The Augusta Chronicle

Spent nuclear fuel shipments to Idaho National Laboratory looking unlikely

The Idaho Statesman

NRC Issues Draft Supplement to Yucca Mountain Environmental Impact Statement

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Public Affairs

August 13, 2015

[LINK](#)

CONTACT: David McIntyre, 301-415-8200

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is releasing a draft environmental impact statement supplement on the effects of a permanent repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain. The NRC will begin taking public comments on the draft Aug. 21 upon publication of a notice in the Federal Register. The draft can be found on the NRC's website.

More Information

[About ECA](#)

[Membership](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Helpful Links](#)

To help ensure that you receive all emails with images correctly displayed, please add ecabulletin@aweber.com to your address book or contact list

[Subscribe](#)

to the ECA Email Server

[Online Version](#)

If you have trouble viewing this email, view the online version

Events of Interest

[Oak Ridge EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

August 22, 2015

[Paducah EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

August 27, 2015

[Hanford EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

September 9-10

[DOE National](#)

In addition to providing written comments, the public will have opportunities to comment at meetings in September at NRC Headquarters in Rockville, Md., Las Vegas and Nye County, Nev., and via a conference call in early October. NRC staff will discuss the draft and how to comment on it in a conference call in two weeks. More information on these meetings will be provided shortly on the NRC's website and in the Federal Register.

The draft supplements environmental impact statements the Department of Energy prepared on the proposed repository. DOE issued the final EIS in 2002, then supplemented it in June 2008. Under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, DOE is responsible for analyzing and proposing mitigation measures for environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and the NRC is to adopt DOE's statement to the extent practicable. The NRC staff recommended adoption of DOE's statements in September 2008, but noted two areas needed supplementation with further analysis: potential impacts on groundwater and from groundwater discharges. DOE deferred to the NRC to prepare the supplement.

The supplement finds that the impacts would be "small." It describes the affected environment with respect to the groundwater flow path from the repository. It models that flow path and movement of radiological and non-radiological contaminants. It evaluates the impacts of contaminants at locations where groundwater is currently being withdrawn, and locations of natural surface discharge along the groundwater flow path, considering the effects from possible changes in climate and water withdrawal, and cumulative impacts from other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities in the area.

The NRC staff's analysis shows peak estimated radiological doses along the flow path lower than those estimated by DOE for the maximally exposed individual at a location 11 miles south of the repository site. It also shows the impacts from non-radiological contaminants would be "small." This means the environmental effects are not detectable or are so minor they will not destabilize or noticeably alter any important attribute of affected resources.

After considering the comments received, the staff will revise the supplement, as appropriate, before issuing a final supplement in early 2016.

Yucca could have 'small' groundwater impact, report finds

Cleanup Workshop

September 29th-30th,
2015

*The Key Bridge
Marriott
Arlington, VA*

The Hill

August 17, 2015

[LINK](#)

The proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain could have a “small” environmental impact on groundwater at the Nevada site, nuclear regulators said.

The finding came Thursday in a draft report from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which is conducting a years-long environmental study into the stalled nuclear waste site.

The report was careful not to overplay the potential effects of the project over the 1 million-year timeframe of the estimates.

“Based on conservative assumptions about the potential for health effects from exposure to low doses of radiation, the NRC staff expects that the estimated radiation dose would contribute only a negligible increase in the risk of cancer or severe hereditary effects in the potentially exposed population,” the report said.

The NRC’s evaluation is an important step toward building the controversial repository, which Congress authorized in 1987.

The Energy Department and President Obama do not want to build it, but the NRC is still obligated to review the 2008 application.

In January, the NRC staff completed the main components of their review, concluding that the site would be safe for 1 million years.

But it also pointed out that the Energy Department does not own all of the land and water rights for the planned projects, and Congress would have to transfer some land from the Department of Defense before construction could start.

NRC, DOE to Host Advanced Reactor Workshop Sept. 1-2 in Bethesda

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Public Affairs

August 17, 2015

[LINK](#)

CONTACT: Scott Burnell, 301-415-8200

The NRC and Department of Energy (DOE) are holding a workshop on innovative reactor technologies Sept. 1-2 in Bethesda, Md. The workshop will explore options for increased efficiency,

from both a technical and regulatory perspective, for safely developing and deploying advanced non-light water reactors.

The workshop is open to the public and will begin at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 1, at the Bethesda North Marriott, 5701 Marinelli Road in Bethesda. NRC and DOE staff will discuss advanced nuclear reactor concepts with participants including reactor design vendors, electric utilities, public interest groups and other federal agencies. The discussions will cover both near- and longer-term opportunities to test, demonstrate, and build prototype non-light water reactors while establishing appropriate licensing processes.

Workshop topics include:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities;
- Reaching common understanding of terminology;
- Outlining existing regulations, policies and guidance, as well as existing support for advanced reactor development, and;
- Identifying potential challenges, information gaps and critical needs.

The workshop will include presentations as well as structured and open discussions, using a facilitator. NRC and DOE staff expect future workshops will build on these discussions.

Editorial: Latest report adds to Yucca Mountain site

The Aiken Standard

August 15, 2015

[LINK](#)

It's long been known that the Yucca Mountain repository site was shuttered largely for political reasons. Even more credence was given to this reality after the recent release of a draft study by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission indicated the site in Nevada would yield "only a negligible increase" in health risk.

The nuclear safety agency is also planning public hearings in Washington, D.C., and Nevada in September related to the report. A supplement to an earlier Department of Energy study, the report has triggered another scuffle between Yucca supporters and opponents.

The Nevada repository has already been deemed to meet the requirements of federal regulators even after the project was essentially closed by President Barack Obama and his

administration for so-called safety reasons.

This should only legitimize calls among some members of Congress, including in South Carolina, to revitalize the Yucca Mountain project, which was designated as the most suitable location for high-level radioactive liquid waste and spent fuel.

It's hard to argue the administration's choice to shutter Yucca Mountain in 2010 was anything but political.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who has announced he will not seek re-election in 2016, has tried to shoot down talk about reviving Yucca, noting that "as long as I'm around, there's no Yucca Mountain." Reid has already criticized similar reports related to the project as "useless" and a "waste of millions dollars."

The move to close Yucca was a complete power play by Obama, especially since many tied it to Reid and concerns over wanting to carry the state of Nevada for the Democratic Party in the presidential election.

Trying to block Yucca Mountain is a case of Nevada residents having a "not in my backyard" mentality. The same certainly rings at least somewhat true of South Carolina residents and the state's resistance to storing waste.

However, keeping South Carolina as a permanent storage facility represents a broken promise from the federal government. Yucca Mountain has been studied and examined for decades, and regulators have said it's a legitimate site for the future. About 70 reactor sites around the country, including at Savannah River, have been accumulating waste while Yucca Mountain has been stalled.

South Carolina policy makers and others in Washington, D.C. should continue to beat the drum to make sure Yucca Mountain is revived as the long-term solution, and ensure Savannah River Site and South Carolina doesn't become the perpetual dumping ground for nuclear waste.

Savannah River Site's new manager focused on waste pathways, infrastructure funding

The Augusta Chronicle

August 15, 2015

[LINK](#)

Savannah River Site's new manager Jack Craig wants to keep the

Department of Energy site from becoming a long-term storage location for nuclear waste, he said during an interview this week with The Augusta Chronicle.

“We are doing everything we can to get waste out of the state (of South Carolina) knowing that we are bringing waste into the state,” Craig said.

Craig, who joined the site as its top leader in early June, said he knows the surrounding community is concerned about ensuring highly radioactive waste leaves the site. Craig, however, supports DOE decisions to bring spent nuclear fuel from other nations to SRS if required environmental studies are conducted.

Shipping some waste from the site requires reopening the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, an underground storage facility in an ancient salt bed near Carlsbad, N.M. DOE said in late July the facility, which was shut down in early 2014 after a fire and radiological release, won’t meet its targeted March 2016 deadline to resume limited operations.

Craig said he supports funding WIPP recovery so the site can continue getting materials out of South Carolina. Other waste, however, has no permanent storage location as long as DOE fails to identify a permanent federal repository, he said.

“Until you get Yucca Mountain, you are going to have to manage waste here for a long time,” he said.

SRS’s environmental cleanup mission, which includes emptying and closing dozens of underground waste storage tanks, will have consistent federal funding for at least 15 to 20 years, Craig said. The environmental management mission could continue for three decades or more.

“As long as we have a liquid waste mission here and a long-term nonproliferation mission, you are going to see similar budgets here,” Craig said.

Craig has 20 years experience working for DOE including environmental cleanup activities at former nuclear weapons sites. He served as director of the environmental management consolidated business center in Cincinnati, Ohio, for 10 years.

His experience with contract procurement at DOE’s business center will help as SRS plans for future operation contracts, Craig

said. Contracts for Savannah River Nuclear Solutions and Savannah River Remediation expire in under three years.

Craig recently spent a year working at DOE headquarters with the environmental management program. His time there will help him secure site funding and project approval, he said.

Since arriving at SRS, Craig has been working on the fiscal year 2017 budget proposal including funding for critical improvements to site infrastructure, much of which dates to the Cold War.

Craig has also focused on filling job openings and planning for an aging nuclear workforce that's approaching retirement age. There's a great need to recruit and retain personnel among a competitive environment for nuclear work near SRS, he said.

Spent nuclear fuel shipments to Idaho National Laboratory looking unlikely

The Idaho Statesman

August 17, 2015

[LINK](#)

There are growing concerns that two lucrative shipments of commercial spent nuclear fuel to Idaho National Laboratory for testing won't happen, and that the missed opportunity could severely damage the lab's research reputation over the long term.

A Aug. 10 letter from Gov. Butch Otter's Leadership in Nuclear Energy (LINE) Commission 2.0 spurred new concerns over the shipments' status. The letter said the U.S. Department of Energy set out a two-month deadline for the state to approve one of the two shipments, otherwise the spent fuel would be sent to a different national laboratory. That laboratory likely would be Oak Ridge, in Tennessee.

John Kotek, DOE's Acting Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy, mentioned the two-month window at a July 13 meeting, which could give state officials less than a month from now to sort things out.

Losing out on one or both spent fuel shipments would mean losing \$10-20 million per year in federal research money for INL through the end of the decade, lab officials have said. In addition, lab and state officials worry not allowing in the pair of shipments could hurt the lab's reputation and cause it to be overlooked for big

federal research projects in the future.

“Years of work have been invested establishing the INL as the lead nuclear research lab and for us to not allow them the very resource they need to do research, sends all the wrong messages,” Idaho Department of Commerce Director Jeff Sayer said in a Thursday email.

Sayer serves on the LINE Commission and wrote the Monday letter, which was addressed to Otter. It was sent to several other state officials, too, including Attorney General Lawrence Wasden.

Wasden has said he won’t allow in the spent fuel research shipments until DOE gets a troubled nuclear waste cleanup facility, the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit, up and running. Problems at the facility mean DOE is out of compliance with the 1995 Settlement Agreement, which governs nuclear waste cleanup in Idaho.

In a Thursday interview, Wasden said Sayer and the LINE Commission never came to him to discuss his position on the spent fuel shipments.

“I thought it was interesting, or at least ironic, that Mr. Sayer in that letter to the governor stated my position, but never took the time to talk to me about it,” he said. “A conversation would have helped flesh out why I’m doing what I’m doing.”

Wasden said his position remains the same, despite signs that the treatment facility might not begin treating some 900,000 gallons of liquid waste until next year. But Wasden also said no one from DOE told him there was a specific deadline for the shipments. He found out by reading Sayer’s LINE Commission letter.

In addition, on a site tour in May, DOE and cleanup officials told Wasden start up of the treatment unit would be feasible by September.

“I see that working out perfectly,” Wasden told the Post Register at the time, explaining that he would be able to uphold the Settlement Agreement while also operating within a window that would allow timely shipment of the spent fuel to INL.

But the facility won’t be operating thatsoon. It recently began a second round of testing and inspections, which could last several months.

“I really want this (nuclear research) material to come into Idaho. Idaho has a unique set of capabilities,” Wasden said Thursday. “But I have a commensurate responsibility to see that the cleanup is done.”

Sayer said he and the LINE Commission “did not intend any disrespect,” to Wasden. “We were simply aware of his concerns and hoped our findings would be a resource for he and his team.”

Sayer said he scheduled a meeting with Wasden early this week.

“I anticipate a respectful conversation,” he said.

Sayer said he is “deeply concerned about the messages” the state is sending to DOE and the nuclear industry. He said not allowing in the spent fuel shipments could impact the lab’s ability to attract top scientists.

“By refusing this research fuel we (are) damaging Idaho’s fifth largest employer’s ability to attract the highest talent,” Sayer said. “We work tirelessly to support our other top employers, the INL deserves the same support.”

The proposed research would focus on “high-burnup” fuel, which is accumulating at commercial nuclear power plants across the country. One shipment would be used to research fuel recycling techniques. The other would be used to research what happens to the fuel when it is placed in storage casks for years or decades.

Initially, DOE requested to send one shipment from Byron Nuclear Generating Station two months ago, and the second from North Anna Nuclear Generating Station in January. The shipments would total about 200 pounds of spent fuel. But the North Anna shipment is tethered to a larger future research project on fuel storage that, if approved, would require a 20 metric ton shipment of spent fuel.

A waiver to allow in the spent fuel shipments requires the signature of both Otter and Wasden. Otter has been mostly quiet on the subject, but his office issued a statement Friday to the Post Register which appeared to contrast Wasden’s position requiring the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit to first be operational.

The statement said that “Otter’s position has not changed,” and that “cleanup must occur as outlined in the (Settlement Agreement).”

“That being said, he also supports the long-term mission of the INL as the lead lab for nuclear research,” the statement said. “In order for the lab to maintain that position, the Governor believes the INL needs to have timely access to small amounts of material. Simply put, you can’t do research on material that isn’t here, and at some point our inability to access that material begins to impact the long-term viability of the mission at the INL.”

Idaho Falls Mayor Rebecca Casper said Thursday that she is also concerned that the standoff over the shipments could damage the lab.

“I am hopeful that as we move forward, policymakers in Boise will recognize that the cleanup mission at the site is separate from the nuclear research mission,” she said.

“I fear that we’ve missed the boat,” she said. “I hope that we don’t let any more tremendous research opportunities slip through our fingers.”

INL initially turned down an interview request about the status of the shipments with Deputy Director Todd Allen, and said INL and DOE had no comment. Later Friday, a spokeswoman sent an emailed statement from Allen.

“Some other labs in the DOE system have various capabilities to perform some of this research. It’s important work,” the statement said, in part. “This funding and the attendant employment opportunities would follow this research work.”